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Review Essay

Racializing Diversity in Colonial Malaya and Indonesia

Sandra Khor Manickam, *Taming the Wild: Aborigines and Racial Knowledge in Colonial Malaya*. 2015. Singapore: National University Press. Paperback, $35. ISBN: 9789971698324.

Fenneke Sysling, *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia*. 2016. Singapore: National University Press. Paperback, $48. ISBN: 9789814722070.

The two books of this review article are valuable contributions to the history of racial theorizing in the colonial setting, in this case the Malay peninsula (Manickam) and the Dutch East Indies (Sysling). Sandra Manickam's *Taming the Wild* focuses on the diverse literature on Orang Asli (first peoples) of the Malay peninsula during the period stretching from the early nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries. It is concerned with the history of racializing theories and ideas relating to notions of indigeneity in colonial Malaya.

To understand the importance of this study we should remember that the ethnic mosaic of Peninsula Malaysia has been ideologically organized along the lines of racialized ethnicity and along the lines of indigeneity and non-indigeneity. On the Malay Peninsula the indigenous peoples are called Orang Asli, a category encompassing three groups who outsiders have categorized as Negrito, Senoi, and proto-Malay. Another distinction is that of *bumiputera* or "sons of the soil" (which includes Malay and Orang Asli), contrasted with non-*bumiputera*, mainly Chinese and Indian Malaysians. Manickam, coming from a non-Malay Malaysian cultural background, discloses that she was not unaffected by these politics. Thus an impression is gained that one reason for her writing this book is personal. Her aim is to show that the present racial stereotypes of co-nationals in Malaysia that underlie the politics of indigeneity are not natural and neither are they primordial. Instead they are political construc-

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tions inherited from colonial racial knowledge that served the British in their rule. These racial constructions that tried to make sense of the differences in population and "tame" the Orang Asli gradually separated them from Malay. Manickam hopes that once the socially constructed notions of race are recognized and their implications understood an alternative understanding about indigeneity can be worked out that can better serve people's identities in Malaysia. This challenge, she argues, should also be taken up in the future by the Orang Asli.

The colonial writings Manickam analyzes are well read by anthropologists and historians working on the Orang Asli. When a modern anthropologist reads these early works and mines them for their wealth of ethnographic data, the racialized theories are usually ignored or blotted out. It is for this reason that these texts appear to modern-day scholars as lacking in theory. But in fact they do have a theory, the theory of racial classification, which is generally ignored. Manickam focuses on this aspect of these works.

Fenneke Sysling's *Racial Science* is about the same racializing theme as Manickam's *Taming the Wild*, only it focuses on Dutch physical anthropologists' practices and the techniques they used to determine and construct racial knowledge in the Netherlands Indies during the same period. Sysling's aim is to follow the late-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century Dutch physical anthropologists to their field sites, and she explores their contribution to the colonial discourse of human diversity by racializing common-sense notions of ethnic difference in terms of objective biological categories. She examines these scientists' processes of making physical anthropological knowledge in the colonial context and how, through trials and tribulation, they tried and failed to biologically determine the racial diversity of the region. Central to this process was the "fieldwork encounter" during which European, and particularly Dutch, scientists engaged local indigenous peoples so they could obtain skulls and bones as well as measurements of their physique and plaster casts of their heads and drawings of their feet. The aim of these encounters was to find objective ways of defining human groups and to determine the biological markers that distinguished each group. Their work developed within a general biological-anthropological frame that tried to develop a racialized classification scheme that would encompass all humans.

Racial Science tries to draw attention to the diverse ways in which the colonial body was conceptualized depending on whether it was seen, felt, measured, or photographed. It provides a detailed study of these techniques and the fieldwork encounters in which they were used. Both Manickam and Sysling's accounts complement each other, although, as the latter author points out, further study is needed to complete the picture of ethnologists' role in the same process of racial knowledge-making in the Dutch East Indies. Sysling's work also lacks the personal touch and political angle found in Manickam's introduction and conclusion. She does at times present the racialist logic that guided the reasoning of the physical anthropologists in ironic tones. The purpose of the two books then is to provide a critically descriptive historical analysis of colonial science's construction of race in the Malay and Indonesian region from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Both authors try to show how the construction of race

was colonially and socially determined by the ideologies of the scientists during this period. Manickam particularly wants to show how present-day race and ethnic classifications are the product of the colonial ideology. In this, the two books have successfully achieved their aims.

The original "two race" hypothesis

The racialization of the people in the Malay/Indonesian archipelago starts in the last decades of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Manickam asserts that the early works written on the archipelago were influenced by theories about human diversity prevalent in the universities in Europe at the time. In the late eighteenth century scientists surmised that there were two races in Southeast Asia, the "black race" and the "brown race." However, as both Manickam and Sysling point out, during the early part of the nineteenth century the word "race" had wider connotations than the biological meaning it has had since the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Then, it could refer to a tribe, nation, common stock, and a group with shared ancestors. It did not necessarily refer to a biologically defined group of people. Only by the mid-to-late nineteenth century did scientists narrow the meaning down to its physio-biological sense.

Sysling, adapting an argument made by Sumit Guha (1998), elaborates that during the nineteenth century anthropologists began to conceptualize peoples in terms of racial strata. Race and what was called "moral temperament" were also intertwined. It was also understood that "races" migrated, and that as newer and more "advanced" races entered a territory they pushed the aboriginal groups into the hinterlands, who continued surviving as original relics. After Darwin, social Darwinists interpreted this process in terms of "superior races" nudging weaker ones out in the competition for survival. The European ideas and their classification of peoples in the archipelago and in the Peninsula developed in parallel with the development of the biological concept of race in Europe. Manickam stresses that with the greater colonial expansion into the interior areas scientists were accumulating knowledge about the peoples they encountered and were amending definitions in relation to the developments of racial sciences in the metropole.

Malay and Orang Asli on the Malay Peninsula

During the earlier decades of the eighteenth century a number of books and articles on the region appeared. These were the works by William Marsden (1754–1836), John Leyden (1775–1811), Sir Stamford Raffles (1787–1826), and John Crawfurd (1783–1868). Works focusing on the Malay Peninsula were those of John Anderson (1795–1845), Thomas John Newbold (1807–50), and the Malay author Munshi Abdullah (1796–1854). These authors' writings could be said to represent the beginning of ethnological and linguistic Southeast Asian studies. Manickam explores these works for their representation of human diversity and notions of aboriginality. According to Manickam these early authors writing on the archipelago and particularly the Malay peninsula at the turn of the nineteenth century found

it difficult to find equivalent Malay words for "race" and "aborigine," but nevertheless they used certain indigenous words they thought approximated the concepts. She elaborates on this early European search for equivalent words in Malay.

Authors such as Marsden, Leyden, and Raffles made a distinction between the coastal peoples and the hinterland peoples. They developed the dual-race theory of the population. They tried to determine the aboriginal status of peoples, and assumed the populations that lived in the hinterland were more "original" than those living on the coast. They each wrote of "original" peoples in racially neutral terms as being peoples "existing from the beginning" and living in the interior. They did not impute any negative connotation to the concept of race. These authors kept much of their descriptions to what was known about the ways of living, manners, and habits of these peoples. Manickam asserts that for them, language was linked to a group and served as markers between populations. Marsden described the Malays of Sumatra as natives (but not aboriginals), and he, Leyden, and Raffles saw them as less "original" than those who were non-Muslim and living more inland. Leyden and Raffles believed that the Malay population came into existence after the arrival of Arabs to the archipelago. Another issue that was written about was slavery. Raffles wrote that the black populations of the region were targets of slave raids. According to Manickam, Raffles Africanized the image of slavery in order to portray Dutch rule in a negative light and thus give an added reason justifying the British intervention. Crawfurd also suggested that the "woolly haired races" were brought into servitude by the "brown races."

If at this early stage the dual-race theory was gaining credence, it was to be shaken by other evidence. Writing on the Malay Peninsula, Anderson made a further division concerning the aboriginal population. Anderson noted that there were at least two hinterland aboriginal peoples. One group was the Semang (Negrito), and another was a non-Negrito aboriginal "race" that did not have the same level of civilization as the Malays. These he called "Sakei." In relation to the Malays, Anderson did not classify them as the aboriginal people of the peninsula but as early migrants from Sumatra.

Anderson did put forward an argument that still resurfaces in modern-day Malaysian politics and that affects not just the Orang Asli but other Malaysian ethnic groups. He argued that although Malays were later migrants, they were the first to develop a method of rule at some early date. Therefore, they were the rightful indigenous rulers of the peninsula. Anderson's point was made in defense of Kedah's sovereignty against Siamese claims. It is an argument that is still sometimes made by Malay politicians, as Manickam shows in her quotes of ex–prime minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad in the opening passages of her book.

Another term that also sometimes appeared in the early literature for an aboriginal group living on the peninsula was Jakun. Although today this name refers to one ethnic Austronesian-speaking group, in its early mentioning, scholars used it as a general term to refer to hinterland populations living in the southern part of the peninsula and around Malacca and who some modern-day writers call proto-Malays. Although the term Jakun briefly appeared in European writings, the name was used by Newbold and publicized by Munshi Abdullah (1796–1854),

who was a Malay teacher and linguist in the employ of missionaries. Influenced by European thought, Abdullah wrote three books published in 1838, 1843, and 1855, in which he also described a people he visited with Newbold (his employer) who were living in the Panchur Mountains and called Jakun. Abdullah also coined the term Orang Asal (original people). According to Manickam, Abdullah used these two terms, Jakun and *orang asal*, as translations for the English word "aborigine," which Europeans introduced to the peninsula. As another way of putting it, Abdullah's aborigines (*orang asal*), those he met on the peninsula, were the Jakun.

According to Manickam, Munshi Abdulla did not see the Jakun in terms of "race" but in civilizational terms. Although he referred to the Jakun life-way as one resembling the behavior of animals and their language as sounding like birds quarrelling, his argument held the possibility of social development. He believed that if the Jakun would undergo development and achieved the appropriate civilizational level, they would discard their Jakun existence and become civilized humans or Malays.

On a global level Abdullah also considered aboriginal Australians and Tasmanians as *orang asal* and being people "like the Jakun" of Malaya. Again, the resemblance was based on their behavior and not race. His term *orang asal* implied the original people of a place and had a positive connotation. These writings by Anderson and Abdullah/Newbold that teased out the internal diversity of the aboriginal population laid the classificatory foundation of what later would be considered its four native peoples: Malayu (Melay), Semang (Negrito), Senoi, and proto-Malay. This distinction would later be developed fully in racialized terms by Walter William Skeat and Charles Otto Blagden in their monumental two volumes titled *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906), which were based on all the writing published on the indigenous peoples of Malaya until then. Manickam points out that the multiplication of groups in the peninsula was a theoretical development that contradicted the dual-race theory of aboriginal "Negrito" and migrant "brown." Now it was shown that there were non-Negrito and non-Malay aboriginal populations as well.

In his day Munshi Abdullah's Malay terminologies for "aboriginal" were not adopted by the Europeans in colonial Malaya. This probably was not the name Malays used in other kingdoms of the other parts of the peninsula for people who had slightly different social characteristics to the Jakun. Instead, and after Anderson, the name the colonials commonly used was Sakai. In nineteenth-century colonial usage the name Sakai implied a people who were racially different from Semang but, unlike the Malays, were also aboriginal and dwelling in the hinterland. By the late nineteenth century the non-Negrito and non-Malay indigenous groups were labelled Sakai.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century the term Sakai also lent itself to another distinction that was made in the literature on Malaya. This distinction was that of "tame" and "wild" Sakai. Europeans recognized that some aboriginal groups lived a lifestyle similar to Malay while others kept a distance by living in the forest. To account for this spectrum, the "tame" and "wild" distinction was adopted from Malay usage. The Malay "tame/wild" distinction fitted well with

the late-nineteenth-century civilization model of human Culture (with a capital C). This was one of the main theoretical models of late-nineteenth-century social science. For example, Edward Burnett Tylor (1871) referred to the Malay world as a semi-civilization that encompassed the aborigines who were part of it.

Manickam does not explore the implication of the Malay usage and what kind of positive or negative social configuration it referred to that existed between Malays and the tribal groups. The fact that Malays saw the hinterland peoples in these terms suggests a civilizational perspective with Malay as the measuring-rod of civility, very similar to that put forward by Munshi Abdullah. This view still exists in the present-day political culture existing between the Melayu and the Orang Asli people. This guiding theme in the political and cultural interrelations between Melayu and Orang Asli can be just as problematic as the racializing one.

Europeans conjoined the tame/wild concept with the concept of "race" during the end of the nineteenth century. When the two were conjoined for the peoples of the peninsula, it gave rise to a theoretical tension between the "civilizational theory" and the "race theory," as Manickam clearly shows. The wild Sakais were those whom Europeans conceptualized as still living in line with the primordial existence of their "race." The "tame" groups were those still seen as being racially Sakai. As members of their "race" they were theorized to be on the verge of extinction as a cultural group through their absorption into Malay.

The tame/wild distinction was also used in the government census, and Manickam's discussion of these categories is very interesting. She reveals important differences in classification between the government census categories and those used by anthropologists, which can be easily overlooked by scholars. What she shows is that the writers of the government census were not using the term "race" in the same way as the term was used by anthropologists in their scientific research and writings, even as some of these anthropologists may have been involved in writing the censuses. For the anthropologists such as W. W. Skeat (1866–1953) and Ivor Hugh Norman Evans (1886–1957) the distinction "tame" and "wild" Sakai was uninteresting. As scientists their focus was on the aboriginal "strata" that still exemplified the way of life of the "race."

At the same time the census takers were interested in enumerating the people of Malaya, and the tame/wild distinction helped in organizing the population according to their way of living that would have implied degrees of government accessibility. These concerns, Manickam reveals, led to two interesting differences in the government and anthropological presentations of the aboriginal peoples. The government representation still saw the so-called "tame Sakai" as aboriginal people. However, in the anthropological scientific register, the "tame Sakai" implied the racial extinction of aboriginals by their adopting Malay customs. Manickam gives examples from Evans, who ignored "tame" groups and who claimed that they were not of ethnological interest.

A further difference between government censuses and anthropological knowledge-making that Manickam points out is that the former never entertained the possibility that any aboriginal population had anatomical traces of a "pithekoid character" (as Skeat put it). The anthropological register did consider the demean-

ing, shameful, and ridiculously absurd "hypothesis" that some groups or individuals might have anatomical signs that revealed them to be in a missing-link category straddling human and ape. Hence, during late-nineteenth-century expeditions specific measurements and motor experiments were conducted in search of possible "missing link" features among members of the aboriginal population.

The name "Sakai"

The term "Sakai" has always been a highly controversial term on the peninsula, to the degree that it was abolished during the 1960s and Orang Asli ("first people") was introduced instead. Manickam questions the interpretation that in the pre-modern period the term Sakai necessarily referred to the aborigines. Her skepticism comes from her line of approach, in which she points out that we should not assume that a name found in one period refers to the same people it is applied to in a later period. She wants to raise the possibility that the conceptual separation between the Malays and Orang Asli people occurred due to British racializing knowledge.

Although this point is commendable if there is evidence for this, neither of the arguments she proposes are convincing enough to suggest that the term Sakai was not used for some peoples who would later be called Orang Asli in specific political contexts. First, she questions why Abdullah did not use the term in his writings for the Jakun. When describing the Jakun he was writing about a specific people in the southern parts of the Peninsula. Where he does mention Sakai he was referring to a people further inland and geographically distant from him. But Abdullah is not really somebody to look to if we want to ethnographically understand the relationship between Malay and the indigenous people. Abdullah was not a local Malay villager engaging with the tribal peoples for political or economic purposes on a daily basis within established social arrangements. He was a town-person who believed that the Europeans were bringing advancement in civilization that would benefit darker-skinned peoples (as Manickam reveals). Abdullah shared many of his ideas with his British employers. He was an innovator, developing European thought patterns into Malay, and he would have followed his employer's ideas on certain issues and sought for words and expressions in Malay that could stand for the concepts in English. A second reason Manickam gives as to why we should consider that the word Sakai might have had a different application in the pre-colonial period is that when earlier Malay accounts mention this name it is always paired with the word *penghulu* (headman) to indicate one half of a hierarchically political relationship. It was also used to refer to a group of people as an "army of Sakai."

In the peninsula the term Sakai was not an ethnic name for any one group but an exonym referencing a political status-relationship with very specific peoples who Malays did see as being socially different to them in lifestyle and customs. Malay elites knew exactly which people in their kingdom the term Sakai should be applied to when the headman/Sakai relationship arose. Although the Malay-kingdom society and its official personnel would not have viewed "tribal"

(in Benjamin's 2002 meaning of the term) in racialist terms, they would have still seen tribals as socially different in other ways. We also know that Malay-speaking peoples had sometimes used the same name, Sakai, for the hinterland tribal people they had a relationship with in other parts of the archipelago (Porath 2002; Brown 1970). For example, the kingdom of Siak (Riau, Indonesia) used the name Sakai to refer to one of its hinterland people from at least the late nineteenth century, a term that has stuck to them as their ethnic name in modern-day Indonesia. In Thailand the name was adopted to refer only to the Negrito peoples of the Southern provinces and not to any other group in the kingdom.

Manickam, critical of Skeat and Blagden's work, the Cambridge expedition of 1899–1900, and the subsequent expedition of 1901–02, writes that when Skeat and Blagden were carrying out their research in the Northern Malay states, which were under Thai control, they approached the region in terms of their own colonial culture's understanding of the peninsula rather than open up to the understandings prevalent in the Thai political sphere. To further her point she quotes Hamilton (2006) in saying that in Thailand it is thought that the name Sakai is negative and Ngo Pa is used more positively. Manickam is trying to make the point that Thais have a different way of viewing the people they call Sakai, and Skeat should have accounted for this and constructed his data in relation to this understanding. The Hamilton quote is misinformed, and Manickam's reason for quoting it is also an error that should be corrected. In Thailand, and contrary to the Hamilton quote, the name Sakai (sometimes popularly pronounced Sagai) is used freely for the Negrito people in the South of the country, and no Thai thinks it has derogatory connotations.[1] If any Thai individual claims that the word has negative connotations then they are aware of the politics surrounding this name in Malaysia. But this does not come from the Thai referential context.

The second term mentioned in the misinformed quote by Hamilton is Ngo Pa, which she says is a positive term. This name is the term that was used in the pre-Modern Thai Kingdom for the Negrito people and is still used today. Ngo Pa (literally "forest rambutan") has a semiotic literary ring to it associated with specific Thai cultural images of this people. Nathan Porath (2001, 2002) is the first to have written about the literary associations of this name in recent years in the English language, as well as about the adoption of the Negrito boy Khanang by King Chulalongkorn and the royal poems that have provided the Ngo Pa imagery.[2]

At present there is no evidence to suggest that the name Sakai was in circulation in the pre-modern Thai cultural sphere (although it would be interesting if such evidence would become available). What Manickam, however, does fail to mention is that Skeat and Blagden's *Pagan Races* is dedicated to King Chulalongkorn, who sponsored its production.[3] Symbolically, for Thais this would have been tantamount to the King writing the book himself. The name Sakai was most probably officially adopted for the Negritos in Thailand sometime during the twentieth century and could just as well have entered the Thai language, as a misapplication of its referent, from the scientific work of Skeat and Bladgen.[4]

Race research in the Indies archipelago

The dual-race theory of "brown and black" that was first proposed in the late seventeenth century led to the pan-Negro theory, which postulated that groups such as the Andaman Islanders, the Semang of the Peninsula, the Negritos of the Philippines, and the Papuans were all related. The darker population of Southeast Asia was surmised to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the region. Other scholars believed that the Negritos of the Peninsula and the Philippines were related but rejected the argument that these peoples were also related to the Papuans. For example, John Crawfurd maintained a distinction between the "fair-" or "brown"-complexioned race and the "Negro race" but saw all the peoples in the region as being aboriginal. Crawfurd also wrote of the "East Insular Negro" referring to the Papuans, although he never visited New Guinea. He did not believe that the Papuans and the Peninsula Negritos were related.

If, as Manickam shows, the observation of diversity in the Malay peninsula was cracking the original "two-race" theory, Sysling shows the same was true for the greater archipelago. Here, by the late nineteenth century physical scientists were exploring the racial status of numerous peoples. During the mid-nineteenth century the British explorer and naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace recognized that there were two biological regions, each with specific flora and fauna, that were separated by what is today called the Wallace Line. As the flora and fauna changed suddenly once crossing this line, he assumed that there should also be a racial line between the "brown and black races" in the archipelago (Vetter 2006). However, Wallace (1865, 209) rejected any such connection between the Peninsula Negritos and the Papuans.

The search for what Sysling calls the "human Wallace line" was one of the push-factors for the later Dutch physical anthropologists to carry out expeditions, particularly in the Timor archipelago. Here they assumed that the "Papuan type" and the "Malay type" merged. This "line" prompted Dutch physical anthropologists to carry out expeditions to the archipelago in search of the point of merger between the Malay and Papuan "races." In the archipelago the Dutch physical anthropologists were not interested in the government's legal categories of European, Native, and foreign Oriental; neither were they interested in how these groups of people affected each other. Neither did they have a tame/wild categorical distinction, but they did come to see the natives living in the coastal areas as being of less scientific interest. They were only interested in the internal diversity of the native category.

Sysling shows that the physical anthropologists' main concerns in the Indies were similar to the concerns of the scientists on the Peninsula. They were concerned with problems of aboriginality and the influences that determined racial makeup. Among this diversity certain racial categories also emerged by the end of the nineteenth century that challenged the two-race theory. First there were the Malay populations scattered throughout the archipelago that were seen as later migrants to the regions they inhabited. Then there were the Papuans and possible Negrito people (who were never found in the Dutch archipelago). The Europeans conceptualized the varied populations in terms of human strata following waves of

migration. There were two further categories of hinterland people, the Veddoid and the pre-Malay (or Indonesian) groups. Under the first racial category were peoples such as the Kubu of Sumatra, and under the second category were peoples such as those living in the interior of Borneo. In Sumatra the racial status of the Batak vis-à-vis Malays had to be determined. The Dutch scientists also wanted to determine whether there were more Papuan communities west of the boundary separating the Asian and Australian region (the "Wallace line") and whether there were more archaic "ulotrichous low brachycephalic pygmies" (in popular speech: "black skinned," short statured, and with "frizzy hair") people in the archipelago. Another guiding question was whether the Papuans and Negritos had any racial connections. It was thought that answers to these questions could be found in the Timor archipelago and in Papua New Guinea.

The second half of Sysling's book focuses mainly on three important Dutch physical anthropologists of the period: Herman ten Kate (1858–1931), who carried out research in the Timor archipelago; Johan Pieter Kleiweg de Zwaan (1875–1971); and Hendrik Bijlmer (1890–1959), who carried out research in Papua. It would seem from Sysling's account that none of these scientists could come up with scientific answers through the advanced and refined techniques of their research methods.

Methods of obtaining data in the Malay Peninsula and the archipelago

During the nineteenth century Europeans developed research methods and techniques of obtaining data to provide scientific validity for the "racial" diversity they encountered in the world. These methods and techniques were applied to the peninsula and the archipelago as well. These methods for obtaining data that could help order people according to racial types entailed skull and bone collecting, anthropometry (body measurements), plaster casts, and later photography. Sysling devotes three detailed chapters on these varied techniques used in the Indies archipelago, which were also used by scientists on the Peninsula.

During the earlier period Dutch scientists in the Netherlands would encourage these collections by making requests from travelers to provide them with bone specimens from the lands they visited. For example, in 1619 Heurnius, who opened a curiosity cabinet in Leiden in 1594, wrote letters requesting travelers to collect bones from all nations and particularly from the land of giants and the lands where headless people lived, so Sysling reveals. From such sensational requests for the bones of the marvelous, the demand for human skulls and skeletons developed into a network in the traffic of human bones, sometimes starting with indigenous peoples in remote places in the empire and ending up with eccentric scientists surrounded by their collection of skulls in the metropoles of Europe. Sysling reveals that the Dutch scientists, who were "omnivores" in the collection of such physical data, were first influenced by the French anthropologists, who were advanced bone collectors. Later they were influenced by German scientists. By comparison, Manickam provides less information on skull collection in the Malay peninsula,

although she does provide one example of Father Favre. He was a missionary in Johor who wanted to collect some skulls of dead Jakuns to show to a French physician, but he failed to obtain such specimens.

In the archipelago, as Sysling reveals, the military hospital and the colonial prison were main sources of human bone acquisition. What was important for the scientists back home was that these skulls were well documented. The collector had to make sure that the provenance of the skull and its gender were accurately recorded. The Dutch anatomists were dependent on the Indies medical doctors and prisons for reliability. But these institutions only supplied the skulls of peoples mainly classified as Malay, "mixed," or seen to be "racially less pure."

Another source of more-desired skulls was the violent context. Battles through which the Dutch government would extend its rule would provide human heads for avid collectors. For example, in 1825 the Dutch government in the Indies had just abolished the Palembang sultanate. The sultan and prince surrendered after a revolt. They were both tried and put to death and their skulls were later sent to populate the Vrolik collection in the Netherlands as scientific specimens of the "Malay type." In 1912 an Albino Dyak's head, which belonged to a certain individual who attacked a Dutch mail boat and was put to death for this, was preserved in spirits and was sent to populate a collection in Utrecht. Severed heads could also be collected in areas where headhunting was practiced. It was from this latter source that more exotic "purer" racial skulls could be obtained. In 1913 the assistant resident in South Papua, L. M. F. Plate, confiscated the skulls of villagers who died in a war during the previous year in an effort to teach the locals the immorality of head taking. Sysling reveals that the Papuan villagers handed over to him more than five hundred skulls. At first Plate kept the skulls and sent many specimens to different museums. It was only when the villagers began to be suspicious of him using the skulls for his own purposes that he burnt the remaining ones in front of them. In some cases medical collectors used subterfuge to gain access to indigenous graves. Sysling provides numerous accounts of this Dutch practice of scientific headhunting, which came to mirror the indigenous headhunting practices the Europeans loathed and saw as acts of extreme barbarism. She also stresses that as items of material culture these skulls changed in meaning as they passed through several hands along the exchange network.

Another technique for recording "race" was anthropometrics, the measurement of body features to obtain the average physical index of a "race." The aim was to provide a more objective and accurate definition of the races. Manickam tells of one of the earliest measurements of this type, which was of a Papuan boy called Dick, presented by Crawfurd. The study analyzed his skin color, hair, lips, the angle of his forehead, and the shape of his buttocks and concluded that his features were not African. Crawfurd also produced a sketch of Dick and published the image alongside a sketch of a Balinese servant to show the physical differences between the two. During the nineteenth century methods were refined with each generation of researchers. But one major refinement in method was the realization that scientists had to make the observations themselves.

Scientists in Europe felt that there was an urgency to obtain reliable data, as they feared miscegenation and that "purer races" would be gradually lost and with them valuable data. Further, those who obtained data could be unreliable in their methods. A new research method of direct observation was needed. Hence scientists came to realize that field expeditions were necessary and justified their collection of physical data as a form of salvaging valuable knowledge about original human races. Organizing expeditions and gaining firsthand knowledge through anthropometry was the new research method after the 1850s. For skin color these scientists used Broca's scale, which showed a range of color tones. On the Peninsula the Russian explorer Nicholas Miklouho-Maclay (1846–88), who believed in the pan-Negro theory, worked with these scales to measure the skin color of the people there as well as record the shape of their feet, among other measurements. He also traveled to Dutch Papua to make similar measurements of Papuans. Some Dutch scientists were not too keen on using these scales. For example, Gijsbert van der Sande complained that after washing the person's face with soap the skin color would register a few shades lighter on the Broca scale. It was also noted by some that skin color also varied between the generations and also in different parts of the body. Unfortunately Sysling does not provide us with more detailed descriptions of the anthropometric data and how they were used and assessed by physical anthropologists.

What Sysling does provide are many accounts of the difficulties that were experienced in these strange encounters between Europeans and local peoples. Measurements were sometimes difficult to obtain, as people were reluctant to allow the scientists to measure them. The scientists' accounts reveal that sometimes they had to cajole villagers to cooperate, by giving gifts or making threats. They also suffered from the heat and complained of the odor of the native bodies.

Other techniques scientists used to obtain more accurate facial images were plaster casts and, after the invention of the camera, photographs. Sysling explains that plaster casts and photographs provided fixed imprints of living persons at one moment in time and became the ultimate technique in racial typecasting. The information from both techniques could be used for immediate comparative purposes and could be studied through anthropometric techniques. They were also useful as teaching devices that helped physical anthropologists to conceptualize racial variety in the empire. The appeal of the plaster cast was that the face would come to life once the negative mold of the caste was filled. But plaster casts of living people were difficult to obtain, as this would entail a person allowing their face to be cast, a procedure that could be both painful and frightening. The indigenous locals were also sometimes uncomfortable in having their photographs taken, and it was sometimes difficult to persuade those who the Europeans thought had "typical" racial features to allow themselves to be photographed. Manickam also shows that British scientists used photography on the Malay Peninsula for the same purposes.

The varied descriptions of the local peoples' responses to the Europeans' strange demands show that they were rather uncomfortable with the methods of data collecting. These research encounters forged temporary intercultural spaces in which both parties were operating in meaningful spheres that were unfathomable to each

other. Sysling's book describes numerous interesting encounters in every chapter, but it is a shame that she did not devote one chapter for a historical-ethnographic analysis of all these encounters as these intercultural spaces were forged.

Pan-Negro theory (the pygmy myth)

As both authors concur, from the later part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries the pacific was imagined to be inhabited by two types of peoples, one being "fairer" or "brown" and the other "darker" and "black" in complexion. Europeans were fascinated by the darker peoples, and one theory even proposed that they were descendants of runaway African slaves. This led to the hypothesis that the so-called Negrito peoples of the Andaman Islands, Malay Peninsula, and Philippine archipelago were all related. It was also considered that these groups might have been descended from runaway Pygmy slaves from Africa. For those who did not adhere to the runaway slave hypothesis, the Black Negrito population was considered to be the original population. Later, when the racial strata model was developed, they were considered to be relic-representatives of the earliest human strata (*strato negritico*). On the Peninsula authors such as Miklouho-Maclay were concerned with the pan-Negrito theory in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and made measurements there and in Papua to prove his position. Skeat and Blagden, at the turn of the twentieth century, dismissed the theory in their two-volume *Pagan Races* as well as the hypothesis that connected the Negritos to Papuans and Africans. However, both Manickam and Sysling assert that during the early half of the twentieth century, "pygmy fever" fueled the physical anthropological science of the period, and the pygmy question became a myth of international scientific interest. Pygmies were defined as humans who were less than 150 cm in height. The difficulty was that the scientists had no real objective data to prove the myth.

From both Manickam and Sysling's account it does seem that early twentieth-century scientists who were concerned with this issue were either disappointing their audience by dismissing or ignoring the debate, or they were forcing their data within a package that could still keep the European audience interested. Sysling provides the case example of Bijlmer, who visited the Timorini mountain people of central Papua in the hope of finding a "pygmy race." After making his measurements Bijlmer raised a similar skepticism to those of Leonard Wray writing on the Peninsula in 1893. Wray, referring to the "Sakai," wrote that whereas these peoples are called dwarfs and pygmies, their mean height was only seven inches less than the average height of a European. Sysling tells us that Bijlmer was surprised to find out that although the Timorini were short statured, they measured taller than 150 cm. He also found it odd that no one would call the Dayak of Borneo, who measured less than 150 cm, pygmies. He concluded that the Timorini were not pygmies. He also concluded that the hypothesis of a pygmy race could not be proven by anthropometry, and that the short mountain Papuans and the tall coastal groups were both Papuans. However, as Sysling points out, Bijlmer kept

the "pygmies and dwarf" discourse in his writings, as it appealed to his audience who wanted to hear about it.

Manickam also reveals how this Pygmy myth influenced the different reception of the works of two important anthropologists writing on the Peninsula during the first half of the twentieth century. She tells us that although I. H. N. Evans carried out extensive research with the Negritos, his work did not make an international impact. According to Manickam, since the time Skeat had dismissed the pan-Negrito theory and the African pygmy connection, as well as the theory that the Negritos were related to the Papuans, the international community lost interest in the Negritos of Malaya. Evans followed Skeat and Blagden by keeping his discourse on the Negrito ethnography embedded in the theoretical concerns of the colonial situation. Paul Schebesta on the other hand brought his research on the Peninsula Negritos into the pan-pygmy debate, and this gave him scientific acclaim.

On reading *Taming the Wild* and *Racial Science* together one cannot help but wonder whether the debate about the diversity of aboriginal peoples inhabiting the peninsula/archipelago really circled around making sense of the presence of the Negrito and Papuan populations, which seems to stir up sensational myths and fantasies about them. That the debate is not dead is evidenced by the fact that the journal *Human Biology* has published issues on the African pygmies and an issue titled "Revisiting the Negrito Hypothesis" (Endicott 2013). Although no one today will connect the African forest groups and the so-called Negrito groups, the fact that the journal has published special issues on these peoples bears out Manickam and Sysling's concluding argument that these types of research questions about the origins of population diversity and migrations are rooted in earlier racializing debates.

Although present-day researchers do not use negative and disparaging concepts for the peoples they study, this knowledge and its representations can still be problematic. But to fully understand Manickam's problem of race theory in Malaysia we can take as an example a recent public announcement by a Malaysian geneticist proclaiming that the "Orang Asli should be gazetted as a national heritage" (*Borneo Post* 2017). The reason for this is because after a DNA study was conducted among the Bateq, Lanoh, and Kensiu it was allegedly found that their genetic makeup differed from the genetic makeup of modern human society and that they had much older DNA material, proving them to be one of the oldest human populations going back sixty thousand years. Hence the geneticist proclaimed that these groups of Orang Asli who carry these genes should be gazetted as being part of Malaysian heritage. What the geneticist wants to gazette is the specific DNA material that is allegedly claimed to have been found in their DNA makeup. Through "positive" racialized othering such pronouncements objectively dehumanize the Orang Asli. These statements reveal that unwittingly the geneticist has simply ceased to see these Orang Asli groups as contemporary human beings and as co-nationals—as people. This example underscores Manickam's concern about the racializing of the Orang Asli, and this is one of the main underlying messages of both books, which show that biological ideas about race are deeply rooted in historical and political circumstances.

These two fascinating books are important contributions to a number of sub-disciplines. They would be of interest to Southeast Asian studies, Indigenous peoples (Orang Asli), history of modern Indonesia and Malaysia, Pacific studies, history of anthropology, and race studies.

Notes

1. There is even a development village that was set up for the Kensiu group called "Sakai Village" in Yala province.

2. The Negritos of Yala know both terms and accept both terms when in Thailand but discard them when they cross over to Malaysia. The forest-dwelling groups in Trang dislike and reject both terms.

3. Although Manickam mentions that the King adopted a Negrito child called Khanang, she makes another error when on page 32 she tries to suggest that the King's adoption of Khanang is the equivalent to an earlier king's purchase of three African slaves. The king developed a keen interest in the Negritos of his kingdom after a visit to the southern provinces and then asked if he could adopt a child. The boy arrived in Bangkok and was ritually treated on his arrival (Porath 2001). King Chulalongkorn's relationship with Khanang was a complex one.

4. Skeat and Blagden did not use the name Sakai for the so-called Negrito peoples. Hence if the name entered the Thai sphere from what was then the cutting edge in the studies of the tribal peoples of the peninsula, then its reference would have been misapplied.

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